

Zeta Schools Wellness Policy

Introduction

Zeta Charter Schools - New York City (Zeta) is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects student health, well-being, the ability to learn and reduces childhood obesity by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.

Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. For example, student participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) School Breakfast Program is associated with higher grades and standardized test scores, lower absenteeism and better performance on cognitive tasks. Conversely, less-than-adequate consumption of specific foods including fruits, vegetables and dairy products, is associated with lower outcomes among students. In addition, students who are physically active through active transport to and from school, recess, physical activity breaks, high-quality physical education and extracurricular activities do better academically. Finally, there is evidence that adequate hydration is associated with better cognitive performance as well.

In recognition of the importance of healthy foods and opportunities to be physically active in order to grow, learn, and thrive, Zeta has established guidelines and goals to be used to develop and implement a thriving school wellness program to meet the needs of all students within the Zeta community. As further set forth below, this program includes the following guidelines and goals for our community:

- Zeta will engage students, parents, staff, and other interested community members in developing and implementing, monitoring, and reviewing a district-wide wellness policy. This will include a Zeta wellness committee.
- All students will be given opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Food and beverages sold or served by Zeta will meet, at a minimum, or, where possible, surpass the nutritional requirements established by state and federal regulations, including the current nutrition requirements established under the Healthy Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010 (www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietaryspecs.pdf).
- Zeta will provide wellness and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity. Wellness and nutrition education will be integrated into other classroom subjects, such as math, science, language arts, social sciences, and elective subjects.

- The central Zeta offices will coordinate management, oversight, implementation, and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives. This will ensure consistency across all of our school sites.

Wellness Committee

The Zeta Wellness Committee will meet at least two times per year to recommend, review, and support the implementation of policies and practices addressing wellness-related issues that affect student health and well-being, including the development, implementation, and periodic review and update of this Wellness Policy.

The Wellness Committee membership will represent all school levels and as much as possible will include the following groups in our Zeta school community: parents/caregivers, representatives of School Food (e.g., nutrition director), staff, school administrators, students, and other community partners and stakeholders. The Wellness Committee shall consist of members who are representative and inclusive of the Zeta school community.

A School Wellness Committee acts as an advisory team to the School Leadership Team and the principal in order to review and support implementation of the wellness policies; assess the wellness of the school environment using the School Wellness Scorecard on the [School Wellness Portal\(Open external link\)](#); and create and implement action plans as a part of school-wide wellness initiatives (e.g., physical activity programs, [healthy fundraisers\(Open external link\)](#), [non-food celebrations\(Open external link\)](#) and rewards) and/or to support instructional goals in Comprehensive Education Plans. The Wellness Committee leader should communicate wellness-related policies so that all staff, parents, and students are aware of and follow policy guidelines. Final responsibility for School Wellness Council governance and policy implementation rests with the SFA food program director and school principals.

Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Sold and Served on Campus

Zeta aims to provide students and staff with healthy food and beverages throughout the school day, including all food and beverages served and/or sold on any school campus. Specifically, Zeta aims to:

- Make all school meals offered through the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (including after-school snacks) accessible to all students.
- Make school meals appealing and attractive to children.
- Serve school meals in clean and pleasant settings that meet all safety requirements.
- Offer a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- Purchase sustainable and local products, whenever possible.
- All meals meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established under the

Healthy Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010.

- Participate in the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs (including after-school snacks).
- Support all efforts to eliminate overidentification of students participating in the free and reduced-price meal program.
- Provide opportunities for staff development and training of employees related to child nutrition.
- Ensure all vending sales, if any, are under the control of the Child Nutrition Program and in compliance with any applicable laws.
- Ensure that no food is sold in the school buildings during the breakfast or lunch periods in competition with the National School Breakfast/Lunch program, except as permitted by applicable laws.
- All food and beverages sold outside of our school meal programs will meet the standards established in USDA's Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools (Smart Snacks) rule.
- Zeta encourages foods offered on the school campus meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, including those provided at celebrations and parties and classroom snacks brought by staff or family members. Students may not bring unhealthy food or drinks to school, including sugary drinks/soda, candy, or other junk food.
- Schools will restrict food and beverage marketing to only those foods and beverages that meet the nutrition standards set forth by USDA's Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools (Smart Snacks) rule.
- Zeta will promote healthy food and beverage choices for all students throughout the school campus, as well as encourage participation in school meal programs. This promotion will occur by implementing evidence-based healthy food promotion techniques through the school meal programs using Smarter Lunchroom techniques.

Food Safety

Zeta is committed to running its food program in a manner that maintains student and staff safety. Zeta follows the following safety guidelines to ensure food safety:

- Foods brought into school must be prepared in a food service establishment that is permitted to prepare and sell food.
- All foods in school buildings must adhere to all food safety and security guidelines.
- Food service areas will be restricted to food service staff and authorized personnel in order to ensure food safety and to secure the facility food service areas.

Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion

Children and adolescents should participate in 60 minutes of physical activity([Open external link](#)) every day. Along with physical education, a substantial percentage of students' physical activity can be provided through school activities, including classroom-based physical activity, recess, active transportation to school, and out-of-school time activities. Zeta is committed to promoting and supporting these opportunities. Schools will ensure that these activity opportunities are in addition to, and not as a substitute for, physical education.

Zeta recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn when they have periodic breaks to be physically active or stretch. Accordingly, Zeta also recommends that teachers provide short (3-5 minute) physical activity breaks to students during and between classroom time. Physical activity breaks should complement, not substitute for physical education class, recess, and/or class transition periods.

Physical activity during the school day (including but not limited to recess, physical activity breaks, or physical education) will not be withheld as a consequence for any reason. This does not include participation in out-of-school activities or school sports teams, which may have specific rules and requirements for participation.

In general, Zeta encourages and supports schools in integrating wellness activities across the entire school setting, not just in the cafeteria or during structured physical activity programs. We know that the best way to encourage wellness is to truly make it part of a child's entire day. Zeta will seek to coordinate and integrate other initiatives related to physical activity, physical education, nutrition, mindfulness, and other wellness components so that efforts are complementary to our wellness goals. Zeta will also work toward the same set of goals and objectives promoting student well-being, optimal development, and strong educational outcomes. To summarize, Zeta aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy habits of students by:

- Integrating wellness and nutrition education and nutrition promotion into classroom instruction, providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health.
- Offering a mindfulness curricular program for students, which is integrated throughout the school day.
- Promoting the consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, healthy food preparation, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices.
- Promoting and encouraging healthy eating and physical activity for the school community, both within and outside of the school day.
- Providing age-appropriate physical education curriculum consistent with national

and state standards for physical education to promote the benefits of a physically active lifestyle and will help students develop skills to engage in lifelong healthy habits, as well as incorporate essential health education concepts.

- Providing all students with equal opportunity to participate in physical education classes and making appropriate accommodations, as necessary, to allow for equitable participation for all students and will adapt physical education classes and equipment as necessary.
- Providing elementary students with recess on all full school days throughout the school year and providing secondary students with recess and/or physical education that meets or exceeds the requirements set forth by applicable federal and state requirements.
- Offering specialist activities that promote health and wellness, such as sports and Taekwondo.
- Providing short, active breaks throughout the school day, giving students periodic opportunities to move and stretch.

Staff Wellness

Zeta supports and values the health and well being of every staff member by offering a comprehensive health insurance program, offering a mindfulness program for staff, and offering gym discounts through our benefit program. We also are committed to providing healthy snacks and meals to staff when we do provide food for our team. This is not only important for the health of our staff, but important to model healthy eating for our students as well.

Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education

All students will be provided opportunities to participate in sports classes, recess, and other physical activities during the school day and/or through the after-school program. Physical education and other physical activity will be tailored to the grade and ability levels of the participating children as appropriate. Students will also be provided opportunities for physical activity outside of the sports classes during both classroom breaks as well as indoor and outdoor recess.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

All school nutrition program directors, managers and staff will meet or exceed hiring and annual continuing education/training requirements in the [USDA professional standards for child nutrition professionals \(Open External Link\)](#). These school nutrition personnel will refer to [USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Standards website \(Open External Link\)](#) to search for training that meets their learning needs.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

The designated official for oversight of Zeta's wellness policy and program is Zeta's Food Service Director. The Food Service Director or designee(s) will ensure compliance with the policy at the SFA and school levels in coordination with leadership and staff at the schools, by leading the implementation, review, update, and evaluation of the policy. The SFA Food Service Director or designee(s) will ensure that schools are meeting the requirements of the established wellness policy by leading the review, update, and evaluation of the policy. The Food Service Director or designee(s) will coordinate with other staff as necessary for purposes of monitoring and evaluation.

Zeta shall provide public transparency of this policy and invite a diverse group of stakeholders, including parents, students, food service employees, school administrators, school board members, teachers, physical education teachers, school nurses, school health professionals, and members of the interested public, to participate in the development, implementation and periodic review/update of this policy. Zeta will actively inform families and the public about the content of and any updates to the policy and solicit feedback and participation through the [school website \(Open External Link\)](#).

Annual Notification of Policy

Zeta will actively inform families and the public each year of basic information about this policy, including its content, any updates to the policy, and implementation status. Zeta will make this information available via the [school website \(Open External Link\)](#) and/or SFA-wide communications. Zeta will provide as much information as possible about the school nutrition environment. This will include a summary of Zeta's events or activities related to wellness policy implementation. Annually, Zeta will also publicize information on how the public can get involved with the school wellness committee.

Triennial Progress Assessments

At least once every three years, Zeta will evaluate compliance with the wellness policy to assess the implementation of the policy and include:

- The extent to which Zeta's schools are in compliance with the wellness policy;
- The extent to which Zeta's wellness policy compares to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's model wellness policy; and
- A description of the progress made in attaining the goals of Zeta's wellness policy.

Zeta's Food Service Director is responsible for managing the triennial assessment. The Food Service Director or designee(s), in collaboration with individual schools, will monitor schools' compliance with this wellness policy. Zeta will actively notify families of the availability of the triennial progress report.

Revisions and Updating the Policy

Zeta's wellness committee will update or modify the wellness policy based on the results of the annual School Health Index and triennial assessments and/or as Zeta priorities change; community needs change; wellness goals are met; new health science, information, and technology emerges; and/or new federal or state guidance or standards are issued. The wellness policy will be assessed and updated as indicated at least every three years, following the triennial assessment. Zeta is committed to ensuring our wellness policy is truly reflective of the needs of the community we serve.

Community Involvement, Outreach and Communications

Zeta is committed to being responsive to community input, which begins with awareness of the wellness policy. Zeta will actively communicate ways in which representatives of the wellness committee and others can participate in the development, implementation and periodic review and update of the wellness policy through a variety of means appropriate for the SFA. Zeta will also inform parents of the improvements that have been made to school meals and compliance with school meal standards, availability of child nutrition programs and how to apply, and a description of and compliance with Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Zeta will communicate this information using communication mechanism similar to other ways that Zeta schools are communicating important school information with parents.

Zeta will actively notify the public about the content of or any updates to the wellness policy annually, at a minimum. Zeta will also use these mechanisms to inform the community about the availability of the annual and triennial reports.

Recordkeeping

Zeta will retain records to document compliance with the requirements of the wellness policy at Zeta's school Main Office(s) and/or on the school's website. Documentation maintained in this location will include but will not be limited to:

- The written wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating that the policy has been made available to the public;
- Documentation of efforts to review and update the wellness policy; including an indication of who is involved in the update and methods the district uses to make stakeholders aware of their ability to participate on the wellness committee;
- Documentation to demonstrate compliance with the annual public notification requirements;

- The most recent assessment on the implementation of the local school wellness policy;
- Documentation demonstrating the most recent assessment on the implementation of the wellness policy has been made available to the public.

Notes

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